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ABSTRACT

Students play the roles of delegates to the U.S. Constitutional convention in this grade 8 interdisciplinary history and language arts unit. After reviewing the activities of the men involved in the convention (Patrick Henry, George Mason, Luther Martin, Richard Henry Lee, John Jay, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton), participants prepare speeches that represent the position on ratification of a delegate they are assigned. The student guide provides detailed instructions on how to complete the activity, contains a list of resources, and includes Internet sites. The teacher's guide ties the unit to California state standards, provides adaptations for special needs students, and gives several suggestions on how to conduct and evaluate the unit. (RJC)



**Schools of California
Online Resources for
Education (SCORE):
Connecting California's
Classrooms to the
World**

Debate on Ratification

**Eighth Grade Lesson
by Janet Mulder**

SCORE

**San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools
601 North E. Street
San Bernardino, CA 92410-3093**

<http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/activity/ratification/index.html>

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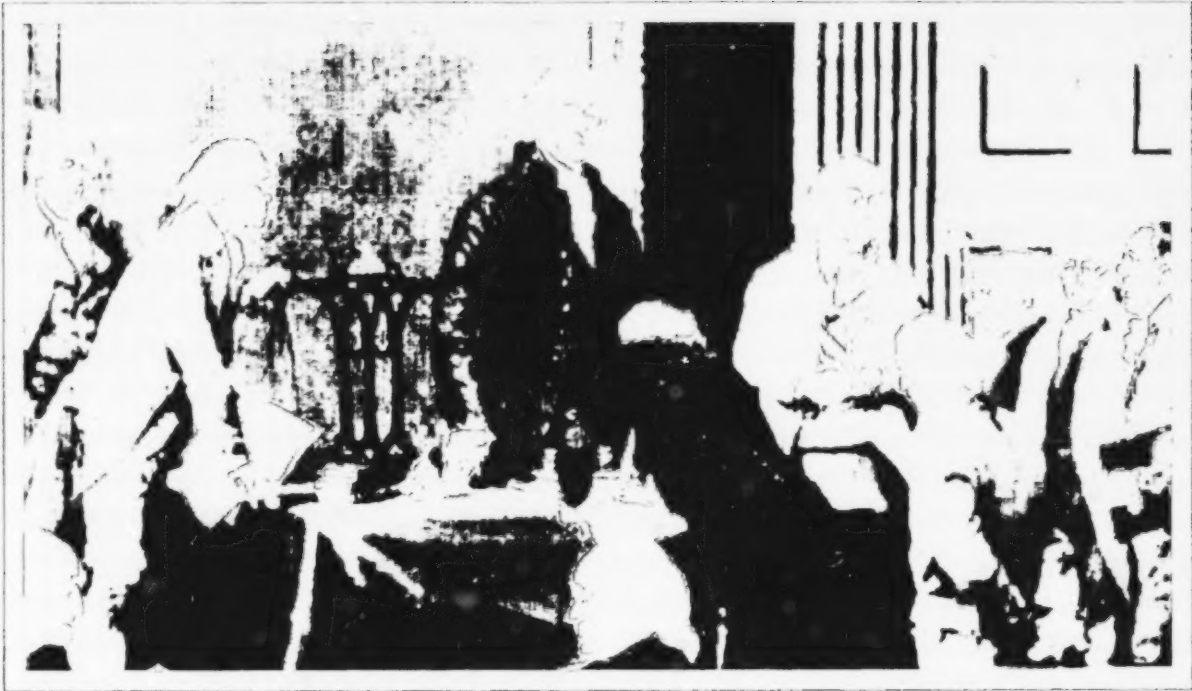
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DEBATE ON RATIFICATION

Should we ratify the new Constitution?

After spending a hot summer in Philadelphia arguing, compromising, writing, and finally finishing the new Constitution, only 40 of the original 55 delegates (or deputies) actually signed the Constitution on September 17, 1787. When it went to the states for their ratification votes (remember it would take a vote 3/4s of the states to ratify), the debates were intense. The Federalists led by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay argued in favor of ratification, while Antifederalists, George Mason, Patrick Henry, Luther Martin and Richard Henry Lee argued against ratification. What was the big deal? Let's find out!

The Task

You will "become" one of these famous men, research their arguments, and stage a debate in front of your state's legislature (the class). The class will then vote whether or not to ratify the new Constitution, based upon the success of your debate.

The Process

- After your teacher reviews a little about the men involved, you will choose which of them you wish to become.
- Begin your research by using the sites specifically designated for your man, but be sure to also review the general information sites as well.
- As you research, use the following questions to guide you through the information:
 - Why would he be considered a Federalist or an Antifederalist?
 - What in his background would lead you to believe he would take the stand he did?
 - What were his main arguments? (Choose one or two you can argue best for the debate.)
 - How did he rebut his opponent's arguments?
 - Did he concede any arguments to his opponents?
 - What made his speeches so persuasive? Technique or content or ?
 - What was he like as a speaker? (e.g., bold & strong, or quiet & soft spoken?)
- Write a four minute prepared speech giving your man's best arguments in a most persuasive manner. Remember to start your speech with an attention grabbing statement. Organize it so your conclusion restates the most important points of your argument. These men all felt very strongly about their positions, so a little emotion may be in order!
- Create a costume and any props you feel will make your presentation more effective. (See suggestions under "Learning Advice".)
- Stage a debate - each of you will have time to do your four minute prepared presentation alternating between Federalists and Antifederalists, and then each of you will have one minute for your rebuttal of points and restatement of your own position. A time keeper will be appointed, and you will need to adhere to the time limitations.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

After listening to the debate and individually taking notes, the students will:

- **In groups** discuss the debate coming up with consensus as to the main arguments given by both sides. Report their findings to the whole class.
- **Individually** create a "one-pager" which is an analysis of the two positions on a single sheet of paper following these directions:
 - Divide your paper in half.
 - Label one half "Federalist" and the other "Antifederalist".
 - Choose an over-arching theme or symbol for each side.
 - Write or sketch some of the main arguments for each side.
 - Cast your vote for or against ratification based on the debate.
 - On the back of your paper, justify your vote in one paragraph.

Resources

View all of the sites listed under your own person, reading all pertinent information carefully. Don't forget to look at the sites listed for general information as they can provide valuable resources too.

Patrick Henry:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/PIX/henrpmatt.gif>

(portrait of Patrick Henry)

<http://www.history.org/almanack/people/bios/biohen.htm>

(portrait and biography of Patrick Henry with links to events)

<http://www.conservativenews.org/Library/antifederalist/af04.htm>

(Antifederalist #4 - collected by David Sampson)

<http://www.conservativenews.org/Library/antifederalist/af34.htm>

(Antifederalist #34 - given to Virginia legislature)

George Mason:

<http://www.self-gov.org/freeman/920503.htm>

(Copy of the The Freeman article on George Mason & Bill of Rights)

<http://www.conservativenews.org/Library/antifederalist/af35.htm>

(Antifederalist #35 written by Mason arguing against the laying of taxes.)

<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/B/gmason/mason.htm>

(Biography of George Mason)

Luther Martin:

<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/B/lmartin/lmartin.htm>

http://federalist.freesevers.com/number_71.html

(Federalist #71 - Martin questions the executive branches terms, manner of election)

http://federalist.freesevers.com/number_83.html

(Federalist #83 in which Martin argues that the Supreme Court will effectively do away with the right to a trial by jury)

Richard Henry Lee:

<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/B/rhlee/rhlee.htm>

<http://www.history.org/almanack/people/bios/biolee.htm>

(Quick facts biography on Lee - good for background information.)

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/PIX/leejproc.gif>

(Statue of Lee)

<http://www.conservativenews.org/Library/antifederalist/af36.htm>

(Lee argues in Antifederalist #36 against the power to tax and how representation was to be determined.)

John Jay:

<http://www.columbia.edu/cee/record21/record2112.14.htm>

(short bio with portrait - talks about exhibition at Columbia University)

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/record21/record2113.13c.gif>

(photo of John Jay and namesakes at 250th birthday celebration - good for costuming ideas.)

James Madison:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/CREV/creve.gif>

(nice portrait of Madison)

<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/jm4/about/madison.htm>

<http://www.jmu.edu/madison/gpos225-madison/zmadisonb.htm>

(Biography + portrait of Madison - scroll down - 2 paragraphs on point)

Alexander Hamilton:

<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/B/hamilton/hamilxx.htm>

(Outline biography of Hamilton with portrait and quotes + good links to information on ratification and Federalist Papers.)

<http://www.jmu.edu/madison/hamilton.htm>

(Biography + portrait on Hamilton - good discussion of his policies)

General Information:

<http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/constitution/conhist.html>

("A More Perfect Union" article. Scroll down to "The Federalist" and "The Antifederalist" and "Ratification")

<http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/constitution/conmain.html>

(Overview + links to high resolution of each page of the Constitution and the letter of transmittal. Also links to the Founding Fathers and "A More Perfect Union" article.)

<http://www.constitution.org/afp/afp.htm>

(General overview of the Antifederalist Papers with index and links to all 85.)

<http://www.law.emory.edu/FEDERAL/federalist/federser.html>

(Allows you to search the Federalist Papers using keywords.)

Print resources:

We The People. Calabasas, California:Center for Civic Education, 1988.

This is a good middle school student text, especially Chapters 16-19. The high school version of We the People is much more thorough, and presents the Federalist/Antifederalist arguments quite well.

With Liberty and Justice for All. Calabasas, California:Center for Civic Education, 1991.

This book deals with the story of the Bill of Rights, and chapters 11 and 12 are directly linked to this study.

Armento, Beverly, et.al. A More Perfect Union. Boston:Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991.

This textbook uses primary sources, including Henry's speech before the Virginia State Convention and paintings, to bring this era to life on pages 113 - 127.

Garraty, John A.The Story of America. Volume 1. Austin: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1991.

This textbook takes a rather scholarly view of ratification and the opposing positions of Federalists and Antifederalists. Pages 226-231 are right on topic.

Learning Advice

You must **become very familiar** with the important historical figure you have chosen to "become" in these debates. As you read his biographical information, his speeches, and what he wrote of important, **highlight those areas** you feel are most pertinent to use with your notes. Be sure to **stay aware of your opponents' points** of view, trying to figure out what arguments they use against you in the debate, so you can **be prepared to answer** them in rebuttal.

Your arguments will take on an air of authenticity if you will dress in a costume befitting the times and occasion. Look at the portraits (listed in resources) for ideas. A blazer jacket (perhaps a velvet one) over a ruffled tux shirt or blouse (especially with ruffled cuffs) coupled with a pair of long knee socks and knickers (easily created with sweat pants pulled up and bloused over a pair of baseball socks pulled up to the knees) are fairly easy to obtain. Be creative!

Evaluation

Students who take on the persona of the men and do the role-playing will receive **extra credit points based on their self, peer, and teacher evaluations.**

- **Self** - Students will use the self evaluation form which asks them to reflect on their preparation, including research and costuming, and their actual performance in the debate rating the areas of excellence and areas for growth.

Peer & Teacher - Using the "Historical Character Presentation Rubric" each student participating will be evaluated by five randomly selected peers and teacher. These scores are averaged and applied to extra credit grade.

The whole class will receive **individual evaluations** on their "one-pager" through a **6 point rubric created by the class** after the task is explained and before it is completed. We will look at what would a "6" one-pager look like, then a "5", a "4", etc., including **over-arching theme or symbol** that becomes a **metaphor** for Federalist and Antifederalist. The **quality and quantity of arguments** either sketched or discussed will be important, and of course their **concluding justification** of their vote. Their actual vote will not count; just their justification.

Conclusion

Many of the ideas in the Federalist/Antifederalist Debates seem to some quite relevant today. Some people distill the differences down to a question of the benefits of a strong central government versus states' rights or the rights of states to make their own decisions. Others would say it is a question of more government controls versus an individual's personal right to make his or her own decisions as to what is best for him or her. How do you feel? After doing this study, would you classify yourself as a Federalist or an Antifederalist and why? Is one "good" and one "bad"? Are they relevant classifications for today? Why or why not?

Reflection

Look at the process followed in this short study. Answer these questions. You will not be graded on this, but you will be expected to turn in your answers as they will help us to improve our teaching in the future. Thanks!

- Was it helpful to have students actually debate the case for ratification?
 - Did it increase your understanding of the issues?
 - Would it have been better if all students had to read all of the material?
 - Would it have been better if small groups had researched each man and chosen someone to role-play from your group?
 - How would you change this process to make it more meaningful to you?
-

Teacher Notes

Grade Level/Unit:

- Grade 8 Unit 2

H/SS Content Standards:

8.2 Students analyze the political principles underlying the U.S. Constitution and compare the enumerated and implied powers of the federal government, in terms of:

3.the major debates that occurred during the development of the Constitution and their ultimate resolutions on areas such as shared power among institutions, divided state-federal power, slavery, the rights of individuals and states (later addressed by the addition of the Bill of Rights), and the status of American Indian nations under the commerce clause

4.the political philosophy underpinning the U.S. Constitution as specified in The Federalist (authored by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay) and the role of such leaders as James Madison, George Washington, Roger Sherman, Gouverneur Morris, and James Wilson in the writing and ratification of the Constitution

12.1 Students explain the fundamental principles and moral values of American democracy as expressed in the U.S. Constitution and other essential documents of American democracy, in terms of:

4.how the Founders' realistic view of human nature led directly to a constitutional system that limited the power of the governors and the governed as articulated in The Federalist

Historical and Social Science Analysis Skills Grades

Historical Research, Evidence and Point of View

3.students evaluate major debates among historians concerning alternative interpretations of the past, including an analysis of authors' use of evidence and the distinctions between sound generalizations and misleading oversimplifications

Historical Interpretation

3. students interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present day norms and values

Lesson Purpose:

After students have studied the events and political philosophies leading up to the 1787 Convention, role-played the 55 founders in a simulation of the actual convention, studied in depth the whole Constitution including the amendments, and participated in the Constitutional Competition, they are pretty tired of this unit. Consequently, I tend to give short shrift to the ratification debates and/or the Federalist and Antifederalist positions. To alleviate this, and to give a possibility for extra credit to the seven students who volunteer to role-play the debaters, I designed this lesson. It is not meant to provide an in-depth study, but it will certainly raise the awareness level towards the Federalist and Antifederalist Papers of even our most uninspired student. To those who become the debaters, a much more in-depth look will occur, but all will gain.

Goals: The students will:

- Experience using the Internet as an important research tool.
- Appreciate the use of role-playing as an effective learning tool.
- Demonstrate historical empathy by presenting and hearing arguments from both sides.
- Gain a better understanding of the ratification debates.

Information Literacy Skills

Skimming and scanning techniques on net text as well as printed text material.

Notetaking skills, pulling out salient facts that will aid in their argument.

Organization of material into an effective oral presentation.

Debate and public speaking strategies.

Synthesizing debate information in one-pager.

Thinking metaphorically to come up with a symbol or over-arching theme.

Gaining historical empathy by demonstrating multiple perspectives.

Length of Lesson: 1-3 class periods - debate, evaluation piece & reflection

If you have blocks of time in your schedule or flexible scheduling so you can get them, then two class periods back-to-back are sufficient for the debate, discussion and the one-

paper. However, you may need one additional class period (or part thereof) for their reflection and to review self, peer, and teacher evaluations.

Resources or materials needed:

Internet access for all seven of the students at once is important to cut down on the time required for research.

Background Information that might be helpful:

The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787. Volume I & II. Edited by Max Farrand. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

This primary source is an excellent accounting of the minutes of the convention from both the Secretary and James Madison's copious notes. I find it an interesting source for some of the students who want to know "what really happened - who really said what!"

The Federalist Papers. Edited by Clinton Rossiter. New York: New American Library, 1961.

This is a complete collection of the papers written by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay to urge the ratification of the Constitution. I find that it is good to have this available in print as well as on the net. It has an excellent index.

The Essential Antifederalist. Edited by W.B.Allen and Gordon Lloyd. New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1985.

This is a collection of essays written to give college students an introduction to Antifederalist thought. I used this to give me a little better background on Antifederalist thought, as my schooling was sorely lacking in this area.

Adaptations for Special Needs:

The lesson is geared more for the auditory learner, but a strategy I use for my visual learners is to take notes on chart paper during the presentation or utilize an excellent note-taking student to do same. The small group discussions after the debates tend to clarify the arguments, and reporting to the whole group levels the playing fields between the groups, so all have an opportunity to hear the strongest arguments and use them in their one-pager. The ability to sketch or write the arguments fits into Gardner's seven intelligences, and we give lots of latitude for other forms of demonstrating understanding such as music or dance. High-achieving students often clamor for enrichment and here is a perfect opportunity!

Extension Activity:

Have students clip articles from current newspapers representing the Federalist/Antifederalist positions, demonstrating their understanding, and then have them present to class.

Lesson Sequence:

- Choose 7 debaters (or less if you have fewer volunteers. You must have at least 2)
- Debaters choose the role they want to take and research it. (I have students do their research on their own time - at lunch, before or after school, or at home if they have Internet access.)
- Preparation of their debate presentation (I have them check with me - a little rehearsal at lunch works well.)
- Create a costume (We keep a costume trunk, but encourage them to be creative!)
- Schedule the debate (I use a note taking graphic organizer for the students. See special needs note-taking strategy. 4-5 students chosen at random will peer evaluate each of the debaters.)
- After listening to debates and taking notes, students meet in groups of 4 and come to consensus as to the main arguments.
- Report small group consensus to whole group.
- Go over instructions for "one-pager".
- Create a class 6 point rubric upon which their "one-pagers" will be evaluated. (See Evaluation above.)
- Individually create "one-pager". Objective is to show what they have learned.
- One pager is graded by teacher using the 6 point rubric developed by class.
- Students do reflection and turn in.

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